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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis, and Administration

July 7, 2003

Ms. Pam Opiela
Project Reviewer
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, TX 78711-2276

Re: STB Finance Docket 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad Company –
Construction and Operation Exemption – Medina County, TX

Dear Ms. Opiela:

Thank you for your letter dated June 11, 2003, in which you requested certain documentation to identify cultural resources within the area of potential effect for the above-titled proceeding to assist in your National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) section 106 project review. The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is beginning the process of conducting an environmental review of the proposed rail construction and operation in Medina County, Texas, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and related environmental regulations, including NHPA, and looks forward to working with you as we carry out our responsibilities under section 106 of NHPA.

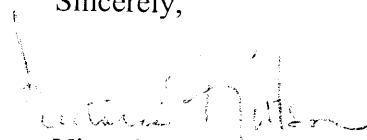
As part of this environmental review, SEA is beginning to conduct surveys of the project area to identify historic sites and structures in the vicinity of the proposed rail line. SEA also plans to conduct technical studies to assist in the assessment of potential impacts from the proposed construction and operation on historic and cultural resources. The findings of the surveys and the results of the studies will be included in a draft environmental document, which SEA will issue for public review and comment.

I understand that you have discussed this project with URS Corporation, Inc. (URS), SEA's independent third-party contractor, who is working under SEA's direction to assist SEA in conducting the environmental review process. In addition, you have indicated that submission of the draft environmental document to you would be sufficient to begin your section 106 review of the proposed project. SEA would appreciate any information or assistance you can provide regarding the historic and cultural resources in the area as we conduct our surveys and our studies.

If you would like more detailed information regarding SEA's preliminary findings and studies prior to issuance of the draft environmental document, we would be happy to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the steps SEA has taken and plans to take to identify and evaluate historic properties, as specified in 36 CFR 800.4. Such a meeting would also enable you to provide invaluable input and guidance during the early stages of our review. URS is located in Austin, Texas and could meet with you in person; Rini Ghosh of my staff and I could participate via telephone. Please let me know if you would be interested in a meeting.

I look forward to working with you to ensure proper completion of the section 106 process for this proceeding. If you are interested in scheduling a meeting or if you have questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Rini Ghosh at (202) 565-1539.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson", is written over a faint, circular official stamp.

Victoria Rutson

Chief

Section of Environmental Analysis